



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE  
FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
APRIL 1, 2011**

**Supporting  
HB 6638: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE**

**Opposed to:  
RSB 1164: AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS TO RAISE  
THE AGE OF JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION FOR YOUTH SEVENTEEN  
YEARS OF AGE**

**And  
RSB 1126: AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPACT ON MUNICIPALITIES OF THE  
INCREASED AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee: This testimony is submitted by Abby Anderson, executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide, non-profit organization that works to reduce the number of children and youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice system, and advocates a safe, effective and fair system for those involved.

**The Alliance supports House Bill 6638** which includes technical and other changes recommended by the Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Operations Coordinating Council (JJPOCC) legislative subcommittee as necessary for the effective, continued implementation of "Raise the Age." These changes were put into place for the implementation of Raise the Age for 16-year-olds and ensured a relatively smooth transition of those youth into the juvenile justice system. The same technical changes need to be enacted so that 17-year-olds can enter the juvenile justice system as smoothly. As a member of the subcommittee, the Alliance can attest to the highly collaborative discussion and consensus reached by the involved and affected system stakeholders including: DCF, the Judicial Branch, the Attorney General's Office, prosecutors, local law enforcement, public defenders, the State Department of Education and advocates.

**The Alliance strongly opposes RSB 1164 and RSB 1226**, which call for the delay of raising the age to include 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system on July 1, 2012. The legislation to Raise the Age in Connecticut was originally passed in 2007. As it stands, Connecticut will already have kept 17-year-olds in the adult criminal system for 5 years after determining that handling 17-year-olds in this way is ineffective, expensive public policy that does not improve public safety.

The delay of this legislation has been proposed to save money for municipalities. However, there is no evidence to show that Raising the Age for 16-year-olds has caused municipalities to incur any costs. Municipalities' only fiscal participation in the juvenile justice system are police-related. To that point, the number of youth referred to court has drastically decreased over the past five years. In fact, the juvenile justice system through calendar year 2010, after the 16-year-olds were added, was smaller than it was at the end of fiscal year 06-07 and just about the same size as it was in fiscal year 08-09. Estimates of the degree to which 17-year-olds will add to the size of the juvenile system have shrunk dramatically (30%) since the planning done in 2008.

According to RightonCrime.com, which calls itself, *the one-stop source for conservative ideas about criminal justice reform*, "Breaking the cycle of crime and turning lawbreakers into law-abiding citizens is a conservative priority because it advances public safety, the rule of law, and minimizes the number of future victims." Research done by the Centers for Disease Control and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention under George W. Bush showed that trying youth as adults is a counterproductive crime control policy. Instead, juveniles tried as adults are more likely to recidivate, and incur significant long-term costs, than those kept in the juvenile system.

On-time implementation of Raise the Age legislation on July 1, 2012 is good crime control policy, good public policy and good fiscal policy.

In addition, the Alliance supports the following four pieces of legislation:

**RSB 1095 An Act Limiting the Use of Restraints on a Child Who is Subject to a Delinquency Proceeding**

**RSB 1229 An Act Concerning Evidence and Detention in Juvenile Matters**

**RHB 6637 An Act Concerning Determinations of Competency in Juvenile and Youth in Crisis Matters**

**RHB 6088 An Act Concerning Children Convicted as Delinquent Who are Committed to the Custody of the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families**

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information.